Wikiquote

Corruption

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Corruption is a form of dishonesty or a criminal offense which is undertaken by a person or an organization which is entrusted with a position of authority, in order to acquire illicit benefits or abuse power for one's personal gain. Corruption may involve many activities which include bribery and embezzlement, and it may also involve practices which are legal in many countries. Political corruption occurs when an office-holder or other governmental employee acts in an official capacity for personal gain. Corruption is most common in kleptocracies, oligarchies, narco-states, and mafia states.

Arranged alphabetically by author or source:
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A

- The more corrupt a society, the more numerous its laws.
  - Edward Abbey, A Voice Crying in the Wilderness (Vox Clamantis in Deserto) (1990).
- Power tends to corrupt, and absolute power corrupts absolutely. Great men are almost always bad men, even when they exercise influence and not authority: still more when you superadd the tendency or the certainty of corruption by authority. There is no worse heresy than that the office sanctifies the holder of it.
  - Lord Acton, in a letter to Mandell Creighton, (5 April 1887), published in *Historical Essays and Studies* (1907).
- Tacitus appears to have been as great an enthusiast as Petrarch for the revival of the republic and universal empire. He has exerted the vengeance of history upon the emperors, but has veiled the conspiracies against them, and the incorrigible corruption of the people which probably provoked their most atrocious cruelties. Tyranny can scarcely be practised upon a virtuous and wise people.
  - John Adams (31 July 1796)

- The furnace of affliction produces refinement in states as well as individuals. And the new Governments we are assuming in every part will require a purification from our vices, and an augmentation of our virtues, or they will be no blessings. The people will have unbounded power, and the people are extremely addicted to corruption and venality, as well as the great. But I must submit all my hopes and fears to an overruling Providence, in which, unfashionable as the faith may be, I firmly believe.
  - John Adams "Letter to Abigail Adams" (3 July 1776)
- We have now, it Seems a National Bible Society, to propagate King James's Bible, through all Nations. Would it not be better to apply these pious Subscriptions, to purify Christendom from the Corruptions of Christianity; than to propagate those Corruptions in Europe Asia, Africa and America! … Conclude not from all this, that I have renounced the Christian religion, or that I agree with Dupuis in all his Sentiments. Far from it. I see in every Page, Something to recommend Christianity in its Purity and Something to discredit its Corruptions … The Ten Commandments and the Sermon on the Mount contain my Religion.
  - John Adams, "Letter to Thomas Jefferson (4 November 1816)" (Online image 1 (http://memory.loc.gov/master/mss/mtj/mtj1/049/0600/0623.jpg) - 2 (http://memory.loc.gov/master/mss/mtj/mtj1/049/0600/0624.jpg))
- The corrupt fear us · the honest support us · the heroic join us.
  - Anonymous motto, used in many placards, quoted at Anonymousuk.org (http://www.anonymousuk.org/about.htm)

B

- He that accuses all mankind of corruption ought to remember that he is sure to convict only one.
  - Edmund Burke, In letter to the Sheriffs of Bristol, (4 April 1777)
- **I have nothing against the smell of rot but something against what hides the smell of rot in the United States of America.**
  - Giannina Braschi, "United States of Banana," (2011).
- **Such corruption feeds on its own success when it meets no correction.**
  - Lois McMaster Bujold, *The Hallowed Hunt* (2005), Chapter 15

C

- **Corruption exists because there is too much, not too little, market.**
  - Ha-Joon Chang, in *Bad Samaritans* (2008), Prologue, p. xxv
- **History shows that, at earlier stages of economic development, corruption is difficult to control. The fact that today no country that is very poor is very clean suggests that a country has to rise above absolute poverty before it can significantly reduce venality in the system.**

- Ha-Joon Chang, in *Bad Samaritans* (2008), Ch. 8: Zaire vs Indonesia, Should we turn our backs on corrupt and undemocratic countries?, *Prosperity and honesty*, p. 151

- Thieves at home must hang; but he that puts
  Into his overgorged and bloated purse
  The wealth of Indian provinces, escapes.
  - William Cowper, *The Task* (1785), Book I, line 736

- **When men realize the depths to which they have fallen they will take stock of themselves and begin the journey back to sanity and safety. This will take time, of course, for the fall from Grace into the present corruption and chaos has a long history.** For thousands of years, man has made a steady decline from the spiritual base which once ordered his life. He has forgotten his origin and purpose as the Dark Age clouded his memory and waylaid his heart. Lost in the twin glamours of Matter and Time man is only now awakening from his long dream and illusion.
  - Benjamin Creme in *A new beginning, Share International magazine* (https://www.share-international.org/master/2019/ma-2019_01.htm), (January 2019)

- **More and more, the nations are beginning to recognize, to take seriously and to deal with, an age-old problem, namely corruption. In some parts of the world corruption has been a way of life for centuries. This has benefited the few, of course, at the expense of the many. For untold ages, corrupt leaders and powerful politicians have waxed rich on the taxes imposed on their subjects and citizens.**
  - Benjamin Creme, *The end of corruption, Share International* (https://share-international.info/master/2005/ma_april05.htm), April 2005

- **In modern times, the large corporations of the West have been found guilty of 'cooking the books' on a massive scale, while in the East it is taken for granted that every transaction needs the 'greasing' of someone's palm. Corruption is endemic, and runs through some societies from the president or prime minister to the police and sport. Electoral corruption is rampant, as recent elections have demonstrated, even in countries supposedly dedicated to freedom and democracy. Such corrupt governments fail and betray their peoples and so surrender their right to govern.**
  - Benjamin Creme, *The end of corruption, Share International*, April 2005

D

- The Lord looked down from heaven upon the children of men, to see if there were any that did understand, and seek God. They are all gone aside, they are all together become filthy: there is none that doeth good, no, not one.
  - David, Psalms 14:2-3 (King James Version)

- The United States is perceived to be more corrupt than at any time since 2011. Transparency International's global Corruption Perceptions Index 2018, claims the U.S. is now seen as the 22nd most honest country in the world – a fall of six places since 2017. It adds that the U.S. is also a "country to watch and monitor", due in part to President Trump's suppression of the media, weakening checks and balances, and increasing conflicts of interest.

- The report adds that growing nativism and populism, political polarisation, and a rise in hate crimes are exacerbating a loss of trust in the U.S. government's institutions. "The low score comes at a time when the U.S. is experiencing threats to its system of checks and balances as well as an erosion of ethical norms at the highest levels of power," says TI.. Transparency International ranks 180 countries around the world on a 100-point scale, with zero being "highly corrupt" and 100 being "very clean". The scores are based on 13 surveys and expert assessments from 12 institutions measuring perceptions of corruption over the past two years... The U.S. isn't the only country showing a downward trend in democracy. Transparency International says the past two decades have seen a decline in democracy across the globe.
    - *U.S. is Perceived to Be More Corrupt Under Trump, Fortune, Hallie Detrick* (http://fortune.com/2019/01/29/us-corruption-transparency-international-2018/) (29 January 2019)
- Greg, what are you talking about? Ending corruption? Like there's a version of this society that isn't corrupt? Corruption isn't the exception, it's the norm. It's baked in. The whole idea of using markets to figure out who gets what is predicated on corruption — it's a way to paper over the fact that some people get a lot, most of us get not much, and so we invent a deus ex machina called market forces that hands out money based on merit. How do we know that the market is giving it to deserving people? Well, look at all the money they have! It's just circular reasoning.
    - Cory Doctorow, *The Man Who Sold the Moon* in Ed Finn & Kathryn Cramer (eds.) *Hieroglyph: Stories and Visions for a Better Future* (2014), ISBN 978-0-06-220469-1, p. 150

E

- *Der Umgang mit einem Egoisten ist darum so verderblich, weil die Notwehr uns allmählich zwingt, in seine Fehler zu verfallen.*
    - Dealing with egotists is so corrupting because we gradually fall into their mistakes out of self-defense.
    - Marie von Ebner-Eschenbach, *Aphorisms*, D. Scrase and W. Mieder, trans. (Riverside, California: 1994), p. 45

F

- Corruption is a tree, whose branches are
  Of an immeasurable length: they spread
  Ev'rywhere; and the dew that drops from thence
  Hath infected some chairs and stools of authority.
    - John Fletcher, *The Honest Man's Fortune* (1613; published 1647), Act III, scene 3.

G

- **Corrupted freemen are the worst of slaves.**
    - David Garrick, *Prologue to the Gamesters*.

- When rogues like these (a sparrow cries)
  To honours and employments rise,
  I court no favor, ask no place,
  For such preferment is disgrace.
    - John Gay, *Fables* (1727), Part II. Fable 2.

H

- Urusvati knows about the widespread increase in criminality. It occurs in many forms, but its harmful essence is always the same. It can be noted that some primitive societies are more moral than those that consider themselves to be enlightened... An instructive book could be written about the corruption of humanity, for which no help is availing. It is particularly ugly when a known criminal preaches about morality and continues to perform traditional ceremonies. It was said long ago that the best ritual, in the hands of a criminal, turns into sacrilege... Man does not properly apply the wonderful inventions that fill this present life. It would seem that radio, for example, should prompt him to think about thought transmission, but in fact this invention is mainly used for deception... The Thinker warned people to look higher than the roof of their own dwellings. 777.
    - Koot Hoomi, *Supermundane* (1938)
- Look at what's happened in Florida — in the last two months the insurance rates have doubled, tripled, and quadrupled so much that people are now unable or unwilling to buy new homes in Florida because the insurance rates are so high... Nobody could really afford that... The government getting into subsidized insurance has been a disaster. The one area that the government has got into are [beachfront] houses for millionaires. These houses, because they're near the ocean — there [are] hurricanes, they [are] flooded again, and again, and again. So the government will (not quite every year, but every few years) for free, keep giving a 1 million dollars to rebuild a house. 5 years later, [it will] happen again, another 1 million dollars to [rebuild] the house. The government insurance for real estate is spent for the One Percent of the population that has beachfront property and it's utterly corrupt.
    - Michael Hudson, in Systemic Sponsors of Self-Interest, (https://michael-hudson.com/2023/01/systemic-sponsors-of-self-interest/) January 17, 2023

I

- אֵיכָה֙ הָיְתָ֣ה לְזוֹנָ֔ה קִרְיָ֥ה נֶאֱמָנָ֖ה מְלֵאתִ֣י מִשְׁפָּ֑ט צֶ֚דֶק יָלִ֣ין בָּ֔הּ וְעַתָּ֖ה מְרַצְּחִֽים׃
  כַּסְפֵּךְ֙ הָיָ֣ה לְסִיגִ֔ים סָבְאֵךְ֖ מָהוּל בַּמָּֽיִם׃
  שָׂרַ֙יִךְ֙ סוֹרְרִ֔ים וְחַבְרֵ֖י גַּנָּבִ֑ים כֻּלּ֥וֹ אֹהֵ֛ב שֹׁ֖חַד וְרֹדֵ֣ף שַׁלְמֹנִ֑ים יָת֣וֹם לֹ֤א יִשְׁפֹּטוּ֙ וְרִ֣יב אַלְמָנָ֔ה לֹא־יָבֹ֖וא אֲלֵיהֶֽם׃ פ
    - Isaiah 1:23, *Leningrad Codex*.
    - How the faithful city
      has become a whore! ...
      Everyone loves a bribe
      and runs after gifts.
      They do not defend the orphan,
      and the widow's cause does not come before them.

    - New Revised Standard Version

- Oh! Can you believe it? The chaste city has become a whore!
  She was once all justice, everyone living as good neighbors,
  And now they're all at one another's throats.
  Your coins are all counterfeits.
  Your wine is watered down.
  Your leaders are turncoats who keep company with crooks.
  They sell themselves to the highest bidder and grab anything not nailed down.
  They never stand up for the homeless, never stick up for the defenseless.
    - The Message

- As the world changes the forms of corruption also gradually become more cunning, more difficult to point out - but they certainly do not become better.
    - Søren Kierkegaard

As the world changes the forms of corruption also gradually become more cunning, more difficult to point out - but they certainly do not become better. ~ Søren Kierkegaard

K

- As the world changes, the forms of corruption also gradually become more cunning, more difficult to point out - but they certainly do not become better.
    - Søren Kierkegaard, *Works of Love* (1847), as translated by Howard V. Hong and Edna H. Hong (1995), p. 76
- **In the developing world, corruption is public enemy number one.**
  Every dollar that a corrupt official or a corrupt business person puts in their pocket is a dollar stolen from a pregnant woman who needs health care; or from a girl or a boy who deserves an education; or from communities that need water, roads, and schools. Every dollar is critical if we are to reach our goals to end extreme poverty by 2030 and to boost shared prosperity.
    - Jim Yong Kim, World Bank Group President, 2013 (http://www.worldbank.org/en/news/press-release/2013/12/19/corruption-developing-countries-world-bank-group-president-kim)

L

- If Lucas were a more subtle thinker, the portrayal of the Jedi in Clones might be taken as a sign of corruption in the Republic's last days. Indeed, the corruption of the Republic and its fall could have been a theme to speak to the Zeitgeist. Instead, the fall of the Republic is depicted as the result of the machinations of Darth Sidious, a master of the dark side of the Force. Sidious plays faction off against faction, employing a strategy of divide and conquer in pursuit of absolute power. All the other characters, including the hapless Jedi, are simply his dupes at every turn.
    - *Film & History: An Interdisciplinary Journal of Film and Television Studies,* Emery G. Lee III, (https://muse.jhu.edu/article/396026), Volume

32, Number 2, 2002 pp. 102-103.

- **Count Dooku**: Don't be so sure, my young Jedi. You forget that he was once my apprentice, just as you were once his. **He knew all about the corruptions of the Senate, but he would never have gone along with it if he had learned the truth as I have.**

  Obi-Wan: The truth?
  Dooku: The truth. What if **I** told you that the Republic is now under the control of the Dark Lords of the Sith?

- George Lucas and Jonathan Hales, *Star Wars: Episode II – Attack of the Clones*

False words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the soul with evil. ~ Plato

M

- And the kings of the earth with souls steeped in **ignorance'*, and discontented with what they have, will at such a time, rob their subjects by every means in their power..., the right hand will deceive the left; and the left, the right.... And men with false reputation of learning will contract Truth and the old will betray the senselessness of the young, and the young will betray the dotage of the old.'***

  - *The Mahabharata*, translation by J. A. B. van Buitenen et al. (1980–), Section CLXXXIX, p. 388

- **And cowards will have the reputation of bravery and the brave will be cheerless like cowards... men will cease to trust one another... full of avarice... sin will increase and prosper, while virtue will fade and cease to flourish.**
  And Brahmanas and Kshatriyas and Vaisyas will disappear, leaving, O king, no remnants of their orders...
  Jealousy and malice will fill the world. And no one will, at that time, be a giver (of wealth or anything else) in respect to any one else...
  Men will... become omnivorous without distinction, and cruel in all their acts...
  Urged by avarice, men will, at that time, deceive one another when they sell and purchase.
  And when the end of the Yuga comes, urged by their very dispositions, men will act cruelly, and speak ill of one another.. people will, without compunction, destroy trees and gardens.
  And men will be filled with anxiety as regards the means of living... overwhelmed with covetousness, men will kill... and enjoy the possessions of their victims...
  And when men become fierce and destitute of virtue and carnivorous and addicted to intoxicating drinks, then doth the Yuga come to an end...

  - *The Mahabharata*, translation by J. A. B. van Buitenen et al. (1980–), Section CLXXXIX

- Ostentatiousness, pride, vanity, anger, and also harshness and ignorance (are) his, O son of Prithâ! who is born to demoniac endowments... Entertaining insatiable desire, full of vanity, ostentatiousness, and frenzy, they adopt false notions through delusion, and engage in unholy observances. Indulging in boundless thoughts ending with death, given up to the enjoyment of objects of desire, being resolved that that is all, bound down by nets of hopes in hundreds, given up to anger and desire, they wish to obtain heaps of wealth unfairly for enjoying objects of desire... Honoured (only) by themselves, void of humility, and full of the pride and frenzy of wealth, these calumniators (of the virtuous) perform

sacrifices, which are sacrifices only in name, with ostentatiousness and against prescribed rules; indulging (their) vanity, brute force, arrogance, lust, and anger; and hating me in their own bodies and in those of others. These enemies, ferocious, meanest of men, and unholy, I continually hurl down, to these worlds, only into demoniac wombs. Coming into demoniac wombs, deluded in every birth, they go down to the vilest state

  - *The Mahabharata*, Shanti Parva (Book 12) Translated by Kisari Mohan Ganguli (https://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/m12/index.htm)

- **Threefold is this way to hell, ruinous to the self, lust, anger, and likewise [[Greed|avarice]]**; therefore one should abandon this triad.

  - *The Mahabharata*, Shanti Parva (Book 12) Translated by Kisari Mohan Ganguli (https://www.sacred-texts.com/hin/m12/index.htm)

- The battle with ignorance is as indeferrable as that with dissolution and corruption....the battle with ignorance is a battle with chaos. 341.

  - Morya, *Aum* (1936)

O

- A viral video of New York Representative Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez using a "Corruption Game" to highlight the need for campaign finance reform during a House Oversight Committee hearing last Wednesday has become the most viewed video of any politician in Twitter history... **the 29-year-old lawmaker... [highlighted how easy & legal it is for politicians to] enrich themselves... Her examples ranged from taking "special interest dark money" from corporate PACs to fund a campaign to using hush money payments to make potential scandals disappear and writing laws that benefit donors and then buying stocks in their companies for personal financial gain.**

  - Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez,quoted by Newsweek in *Alexandria Ocasio-Cortez's 'Corruption Game' Speech, is Now the Most Viewed Twitter Video of Any Politician, Chantal Da Silva* (https://www.newsweek.com/alexandria-ocasio-cortezs-corruption-game-speech-now-most-viewed-video-any-1327816) (12 February 2019)

People will become atheists and thieves... the kings of the earth, with hearts wedded to sin without knowledge and always boastful of their wisdom, will challenge one another... ~Mahabharata, Book 3, Vana Parva

P

- False words are not only evil in themselves, but they infect the soul with evil.

  - Plato, *Phaedes* 91

- **None of the governments, as they now exist, is worthy of the philosophic nature, and hence we see that nature warped and corrupted; just as a foreign seed, when sown in an alien soil, generally loses its native quality, and tends to be subdued and pass**

into the plant of the country, even so this philosophic nature, so far from preserving its distinctive power, now suffers a decline and takes on a different character.

- Plato, *The Republic*, 497b

- At length corruption, like a general flood
(So long by watchful ministers withstood),
Shall deluge all; and avarice, creeping on,
Spread like a low-born mist, and blot the sun.
    - Alexander Pope, *Moral Essays* (1731-35), Epistle III, line 135.

R

- **A corrupted mind can't recognize the beauty of the world.**
    - Amit Ray, *Meditation: Insights and Inspiration (https://books.google.com/books?id=s2ctBgAAQBAJ&pg=PA39)*. Inner Light Publishers. 2010. p. 39. ISBN 978-93-82123-31-6.

T

- *Corruptissima re publica plurimae leges.*
    - Translation: The more numerous the laws, the more corrupt the government.
    - *Variant:* The more corrupt the state, the more laws.
    - *Original Quote:* And now bills were passed, not only for national objects but for individual cases, and laws were most numerous when the commonwealth was most corrupt.
    - Tacitus, Book III,27. *Annals* (117)

- I will not pay bribes
- I will not seek bribes
- I will work with others to campaign against corruption
- I will speak out against corruption and report on abuse
- I will only support candidates for public office who say no to corruption and demonstrate transparency, integrity and accountability
    - Transparency International, *The Declaration Against Corruption*

- **Corruption – the abuse of entrusted power for private gain – is wrong. It destroys the basic rights of hundreds of millions of people across the world, it has devastating consequences on the services provided by public institutions and it undermines the prospect for a better life for future generations.**
I believe together we can work towards ending corruption, overcoming widespread injustice and impunity.
All forms of corruption must be ended to secure the basic rights of all people and ensure a world where everyone can live in dignity.
This Declaration Against Corruption is consistent with and supportive of the Universal Declaration of Human Rights and the United

Nations Convention against Corruption.
It is also consistent with Transparency International's core values: Transparency, Accountability, Integrity, Solidarity, Courage, Justice, Democracy.

- Transparency International, The Declaration Against Corruption (https://www.transparency.org/declaration/en)

W

- **We believe that transparency in government activities leads to reduced corruption, better government and stronger democracies. All governments can benefit from increased scrutiny by the world community, as well as their own people. We believe this scrutiny requires information. Historically that information has been costly - in terms of human life and human rights. But with technological advances - the internet, and cryptography - the risks of conveying important information can be lowered.**
  - Wikileaks about (https://www.wikileaks.org/wiki/Wikileaks:About)

We believe that transparency in government activities leads to reduced corruption, better government and stronger democracies... ~ Wikileaks:About (https://www.wikileaks.org/wiki/Wikileaks:About)

Hoyt's New Cyclopedia Of Practical Quotations

Quotes reported in *Hoyt's New Cyclopedia Of Practical Quotations* (1922), p. 140.

- *Spiritalis enim virtus sacramenti ita est ut lux: etsi per immundos transeat, non inquinatur.*
  - The spiritual virtue of a sacrament is like light: although it passes among the impure, it is not polluted.
  - Augustine of Hippo, *Works*, Volume III. In Johannis Evang. Cap. I. Tr. V. Section XV.
- 'Tis the most certain sign, the world's accurst
  That the best things corrupted, are the worst;
  'Twas the corrupted Light of knowledge, hurl'd
  Sin, Death, and Ignorance o'er all the world;
  That Sun like this (from which our sight we have)
  Gaz'd on too long, resumes the light he gave.
  - Sir John Denham, *Progress of Learning*.
- I know, when they prove bad, they are a sort of the vilest creatures: yet still the same reason gives it: for, Optima corrupta pessima: the best things corrupted become the worst.
  - Owen Feltham, *Resolves*, XXX. Of Woman, p. 70. Pickering's Reprint of Fourth Ed. (1631).
- So true is that old saying, Corruptio optimi pessima.
  - Samuel Purchas, *Pilgrimage*, *To the Reader*; of religion. Saying may be traced to Thomas Aquinas, *Prim. Soc.*, Art. I. 5. Aristotle, *Eth. Nic.*, VIII. 10. 12. Eusebius, Demon. Evang. I, IV, Chapter XII, St. Gregory, *Moralia on Job*.

- The men with the muck-rake are often indispensable to the well-being of society, but only if they know when to stop raking the muck.
  - Theodore Roosevelt, address at the Corner-stone laying of the Office Building of House of Representatives (April 14, 1906).

See also

- Abuse of power

External links

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